

# FINAL DECISION DOCUMENTATION

for

## Stoned Gopher Density Management Thinning Project

**Environmental Assessment Number OR-086-04-02**

USDI - Bureau of Land Management  
Oregon State Office  
Salem District  
Tillamook Resource Area  
Yamhill County, Oregon

### INTRODUCTION

An EA (Environmental Assessment) was completed in August 1998 for the Willamina Creek Fish Habitat Enhancement and Stoned Gopher Density Management Thinning projects. Timber sale layout work occurred in Fiscal Year 1999; however the implementation of the density management thinning project was deferred due to a series of court rulings<sup>1</sup>.

Subsequently the original density management thinning project has undergone review for consistency with agency policy and NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) adequacy. Based upon this review a decision was made by the Tillamook Field Manager to modify the density management thinning project and to prepare a new environmental assessment (EA OR-086-04-02).

EA OR-086-04-02, including a FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact), was made available for a 30-day public review period on June 4, 2004. One letter was received. The Bureau of Land Management's response to the comments in this letter is found in *Appendix 3, Public Involvement*. These comments were considered in reaching a final decision.

### DECISION

Based on site-specific analysis, the supporting project record, management recommendations contained in the WA (*Deer Creek, Panther Creek, Willamina Creek, and South Yamhill Watershed Assessment*), LSRA (*Late-Successional Reserve Assessment for Oregon's Northern*

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<sup>1</sup> Oregon Natural Resources Council v. United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, Civil No. 98-0942WD and Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Association, et al. v. National Marine Fisheries Service.

*Coast Range Adaptive Management Area*), AMA Guide (*Northern Coast Range Adaptive Management Area Guide*), as well as the management direction contained in the RMP (*Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*), I have decided to implement the density management thinning project described in Alternative 1 on pages 9-12 of the EA.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The alternatives considered in detail included the proposed action alternative (Alternative 1) which initiated the environmental analysis process and the "no action" alternative (Alternative 2) which is procedurally required. A description of the alternative is contained in the EA, pp. 9-12.

## **REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

Considering public comment, the content of the EA and supporting project record, the management recommendations contained in the WA, LSRA and AMA Guide, and the management direction contained in the RMP, I have decided to implement Alternative 1. My rationale for this decision follows:

1. Alternative 1 addresses the identified purpose and need for action in that it will accelerate the development of some late-successional forest structural features and enhance the overall level of diversity in the area (EA, pp. 23-24), as well as provide social and economic benefits to local communities through the supply of approximately 4 million board feet of merchantable timber to local mills;
2. Alternative 2 was not selected because it does not address the purpose and need for action in that the stand development would continue to slow over the next 50 years. Specifically, the level of competition among trees would be high, live crown ratios would decrease, diameter growth would decline, mortality would increase, and understory development would be limited (EA, p. 25). Additionally, this alternative would not contribute to the local economy;
3. Alternative 1 is consistent with applicable land use plans, policies and programs (EA, p. 8); and
4. The long-term benefits of Alternative 1 in accelerating the development of some late-successional forest structural features and contributing to a sustainable supply of timber outweigh the impacts to soil productivity (EA, pp. 26-27), invasive/non-native weeds (EA, pp. 12-13), fish (EA, pp. 14-16), and wildlife (EA, pp. 18-22).

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

One letter was received during the 30-day review period for the EA and FONSI. This letter did not provide new information, nor did it identify a flaw in assumptions, analysis, or data, that would alter the environmental analysis disclosed in the EA or conclusions documented in the FONSI. It is my determination that Alternative 1 will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No

environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

### **PROTEST PROVISIONS**

In accordance with Forest Management Regulations at 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for the Stoned Gopher Density Management Thinning project will not become effective or be open to formal protest until the Notice of Sale is published "in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located." The Notice of Sale is anticipated to be published in September, 2004 in the *Headlight Herald* and *News-Register*, newspapers respectively of Tillamook and McMinnville, Oregon.

To protest a forest management decision, a person must submit a written protest to Tillamook Field Manager, 4610 Third Street, Tillamook, Oregon 97141-0161 by the close of business (4:00 P.M.) not more than 15 days after publication of the Notice of Sale. The protest must clearly and concisely state the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error.

### **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

If no protest is received by the close of business (4:00 P.M.) within 15 days after publication of the Notice of Sale, the decision will become final. If a timely protest is received, the decision will be reconsidered in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available, and a final decision will be issued in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3.

### **CONTACT PERSON**

For additional information, contact Kevin Teigland, Tillamook Field Office, 4610 Third Street, Tillamook, Oregon 97141; telephone (503) 815-1100.

Approved by: \_\_\_/s/ Katrina Symons\_\_\_\_\_  
Katrina Symons  
Tillamook Field Manager

\_\_\_\_August 25, 2004\_\_\_\_  
Date